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Applying for TANF: Ten Tips for Relative Caregivers

TANF provides financial assistance to help with basic living expenses for children and families living in Maine.



Relatives as Parents
Program

1. When in doubt, apply!
2. Many children being cared for by relatives who are residents of Maine can receive TANF, as long as the relative plans to care for the child for at least one month.
3. Almost anyone related to a child by blood, adoption, or marriage can receive TANF on behalf of an eligible child, when the child is living with them. This includes spouses and former spouses of relatives, even if the child's relative is not in the home.
4. You do not need to have legal custody or guardianship of the child to receive TANF on behalf of the child.
5. You will be asked to provide the names and contact information of the birth parents so that DHHS can collect child support.
6. If you are a relative applying just for a child living with you, *only the child's* income and needs are considered. You do not need to provide information about your income and assets. If a DHHS worker asks you for this information, you may need to specify that you are applying for *Child-only TANF*.
7. You have the **option** of applying for yourself as well as the child. In this case, you will need to provide information about your income and assets. Many assets and some income is not counted, and certain expenses are deducted from your total income. If you qualify, you will get more assistance, but you may need to fulfill certain work requirements. If you currently work, volunteer, or go to school, this may satisfy the requirements.
8. A DHHS worker can send you an application and help you figure out how to get assistance for as many people in your household as possible. You can call DHHS at 1-877-543-7669 statewide or contact your local DHHS office directly.
9. When you fill out the application form for TANF, you can also check off to apply for MaineCare and food stamps at the same time. If you are having trouble with any part of the application, you can ask for help or have a DHHS worker to fill out the form for you.
10. If you believe you may not be able to meet some of the requirements, you can still apply. You can ask for DHHS to make an exception for you if you have a good reason. This is called having a *Good Cause* exception. You can get more information about TANF from the Maine Equal Justice Partners website at www.mejp.org/tanf/index_html.